Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2014
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe, log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the following sites:

http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm
Now available:
http://www.atarinews.org

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/

=~=~=~=

A-ONE #1603 01/17/14

~ What Is Net Neutrality? ~ People Are Talking! ~ Yahoo COO Leaves!
~ Google Glass Case: Win! ~ XP AV Protection Ending ~ Facebook Snooping Bad?

~ Hackers Using A Fridge? ~ MSE Reprieve for XP Use ~ Teens Flee Facebook!
~ Protect Your Kids Online ~ What Windows 9 Must Do! ~ Facebook Does Trends!

-* Net Neutrality Struck Down! *-
-* Nintendo Confirms Wii U Has Flopped! *-
-* FCC To Fight Open-Internet Ruling Defeat! *-

=~=~=~=

->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

We've had somewhat of a reprieve regarding the weather lately. Not too bad having days with temps in the 40's or higher in New England! Most of our snow cover is gone, at least in the yard. Those mountains of snow in parking lots, etc. are still around, though! This recent trend may be changing next week, but for now, I'm going to enjoy it!

Tech news has been dwindling/changing the past couple of years. News pertaining to computer technology and internet use has been moving more and more to more mobile devices and "apps" - something that we really haven't covered much - nor intend to do so. Additionally, our sources for news feeds, etc. have been constantly changing, making things more difficult to do here. It's taking more time and effort to put together an issue weekly; and our issues seem to be shrinking in size, over time. We'll continue to monitor the situation, but putting A-ONE together every week has become more work than enjoyment. If this continues, I may have to reconsider A-ONE's future.

Until next time...

=~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintendo Confirms Wii U Has Flopped!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Nintendo Confirms Wii U Has Flopped

Nintendo has confirmed what we knew already: its unhappy controller/console combo, the Wii U, is a flop. The company said hardware sales of the Wii U had failed to reach its target during the year-end, pushing it into a third consecutive annual loss, Reuters reports.

We failed to reach our target for hardware sales during the year-end, when revenues are the highest, said Nintendo s president, Satoru Iwata, at a shareholder briefing on the sales figures.

With the Wii U failing to shift off shelves and that despite a $50 price cut last September, to $299 Nintendo has slashed its global sales forecast for the device for the year to March 31 by almost 70%. It said it s expecting Wii U sales to number just 2.8 million units over that period. It also cut its sales forecast for its handheld 3DS console to 13.5 million units from 18 million.

Both Nintendo s devices are facing fierce competition from non-specialist consumer hardware fuelled by thousands of often inexpensive games apps aka the smartphones and tablets running on platforms such as Google s Android OS and Apple s iOS. Ownership of app-supporting mobile devices has exploded since the original Wii s hey-day, of circa 2006, shifting the gaming goalposts from the living room to people s pockets.

Meanwhile, the home console market has been increasingly dominated by Microsoft s Xbox and Sony s PlayStation leaving Nintendo to be squeezed out by those more powerful home consoles at the higher end, attracting pro gamers with huge franchise titles such as Grand Theft Auto, and driven out at the lower end by the consumerization of portable gaming via mainstream mobile devices. Talk about a rock and a hard place.

The other point to note is that the Wii U itself just isn t very good. It s neither fish nor fowl, so to speak. As TC columnist MG Siegler put it back in September, it s a poor concept accentuated by poor hardware . He also described Nintendo as being in the beginning of a death spiral . Today s sales forecasts pour more fuel on those flames.

Nintendo said it is now expecting an operating loss of 35 billion yen ($335.76 million) this business year vs its initial forecast of a 100 billion yen profit. It also warned of a net loss of 25 billion yen for the year ending on March 31 having previously projected a 55 billion yen profit. And expects revenues of 590 billion yen, down 36% from its prior forecast.

=~=~=~=

A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. Appeals Court Strikes Down ’Net Neutrality’

Any hope for net neutrality in America that is, the idea that your Internet Service Provider should treat all content on the Internet equally, regardless of what it contains or where it comes from now relies on the 9 justices of the Supreme Court.

In the case of Verizon v. FCC, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on Tuesday struck down major portions of the Federal Communications Commission s 2010 order that imposed network neutrality regulations on wireline broadband services. The ruling is a victory for telecom and cable companies who have fought several net neutrality restrictions vociferously for years.

As Kate Tummarello of The Hill notes, the ruling is a blow to President Obama, who made net neutrality a campaign pledge in 2008.

The original FCC order said that wireline ISPs shall not block lawful content, applications, services or non-harmful devices, subject to reasonable network management while also mandating that ISPs shall not unreasonably discriminate in transmitting lawful traffic over a consumer s broadband Internet access service.

In its ruling against the FCC s rules, the court said that such restrictions are not needed in part because consumers have a choice in which ISP they use.

Without broadband provider market power, consumers, of course, have options, the court writes. They can go to another broadband provider if they want to reach particular edge providers or if their connections to particular edge providers have been degraded.

The court s full ruling is available online here.

If the ruling is upheld, it could enable Internet Service Providers like Verizon and Comcast to deliver certain services and websites at faster speeds, a practice that was illegal under previous net neutrality rules. Per Jeff John Roberts of GigaOM:

"The upshot of Tuesday s ruling is that it could open the door for internet giants like Verizon and Time Warner to cut deals with large content providers say Disney or Netflix to ensure that their web content was delivered faster and more reliably than other sites. This could not only restrict consumers choice but also provide a threat to smaller websites who do not have the resources to pay for any express lanes that the broadband providers but choose to create."

For a deeper definition of Net Neutrality, and why it matters, read this explanation from Whitson Gordon, or this more technical explanation from the technology site Ars Technica.

FCC To Fight Open-Internet Court Defeat

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission said it will fight to preserve its power to require equal treatment of Internet traffic, prolonging a battle that has pitted phone carriers that want to charge for carrying content against Web companies that would pay.

The U.S. Court of Appeals on Jan. 14 sided with Verizon Communications Inc. in its decision tossing out the FCC s rules against companies blocking or slowing Web access. The court invited the agency to act, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler said today during a speech in Washington.

I intend to fight, said Wheeler, a Democrat.

The court ruling gives Internet-service providers including Verizon and AT&T Inc. freedom to charge Web companies such as Google Inc.and Netflix Inc. to reach subscribers. Policy groups say the ruling will set the stage for service providers to throttle the wide-open Web and replace it with sponsored channels. Verizon said in a statement that consumers Web access won t change.

Using our authority we will re-address the concepts in the open Internet order, as the court invited, to encourage growth and innovation and enforce against abuse, Wheeler said.

Asked for details after the speech, Wheeler said, twice, I m going to accept the invitation. Watch.

Supporters of the stricken rule have urged the FCC to reclaim power over Internet service providers by using a legal framework different from the theory attacked by the court. The three-judge panel in its decision also pointed to FCC powers that remain following its decision for jurisdiction over broadband.

Wheeler has said the FCC may appeal the decision.

Proponents say regulations are needed to keep Internet service providers from interfering with rival video and other services. They say that without rules, Internet providers could favor wealthier, established players at the expense of startups, squelching innovation.

Verizon, based in New York, told the appeals court on Sept. 9 that the FCC s rules may make it more difficult to manage increasing network traffic, and would damp investment in more Internet capacity.

What Is ’Net Neutrality’ and How Does It Affect You?

Net neutrality means that every side on the Internet should be equally accessible, no matter whether you’re going to Amazon, YouTube, or Facebook. Your Internet Service Provider is supposed to offer you free and equal access to all those sites.

But Tuesday’s ruling against the FCC changes that.

Let’s use video streaming services, like YouTube and Netflix as an example.

Some sites like YouTube could cut a deal with your Internet Service Provider to allow you to access it faster and to slow access to other streaming sites like Netflix.

But that’s just one possibility.

Net neutrality advocates say that these ruling could also allow Internet

Service Providers to slow everything, and then charge you extra to allow faster access to a particular site, like Amazon.

If you don’t like the sound of all this, note that net neutrality rules have never applied to mobile devices. So mobile Internet providers in the U.S. did not have to provide free and equal access to everything on the Net.

Why Is Tuesday’s Court Decision on Net Neutrality Such a Big Deal? And What Happens Next?

Internet providers are now free to stop or slow sites and apps they dislike and offer faster access to services they like an upgrade of the Internet that could make it look a lot more like cable TV, where you pay to get particular channels or bundles of channels.

Blame for the demolition of net neutrality goes to a federal court that agreed with objections filed by Verizon. And the tough thing for Internet users is that the court s opinion of the Federal Communications Commission s rules isn t wrong. The FCC s rules were weak.

The 63-page ruling by judges David S. Tatel, Laurence H. Silberman and Judith W. Rogers for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit said that because the FCC declined to classify broadband providers the way you probably think of them as common carriers that deliver information without interference, as the phone companies are considered it can t impose common-carrier-style regulations through other means:

> Given that the Commission has chosen to classify broadband providers in a manner that exempts them from treatment as common carriers, the Communications Act expressly prohibits the Commission from nonetheless regulating them as such.

So informed, the court zapped provisions in the FCC s Open Internet Order of 2010 that banned broadband providers from blocking lawful content, applications, services or practicing unreasonable discrimination against lawful network traffic. The court did keep a transparency rule that providers must tell you if they block or discriminate for or against certain types of traffic.

Verizon, the company that filed the suit, says it won t start blocking sites but a statement posted under the name of General Counsel Randal Milch didn t rule out slowing some sites or charging other sites for faster delivery:

> Verizon has been and remains committed to the open Internet which provides consumers with competitive choices and unblocked access to lawful websites and content when, where, and how they want.

For an example of what s now possible, see AT&T s announcement from last week of a new Sponsored Data option on its wireless network through which a company could give you free data use to coax you into trying out its stuff. Or Google working with carriers in the Philippines to offer Free Zone mobile access to its services. Or Facebook providing free in-flight access to its services to GoGo WiFi users.

Those deals can be great if you get something for free. But for a startup looking to compete with a large, established company that can now buy its way to the head of the line and not just on wireless but in wired broadband, where most Americans face a local monopoly or a duopoly these deals are not nearly so awesome. Which means that free access may cost you in terms of less competition and less innovation in Web services and apps.

(Understand that Yahoo Tech is published by a large Internet firm whose fortunes could be hindered by unfriendly Internet providers. But you could say about the same of any newspaper, TV station or blogger.)

If you want to blame the court or Verizon for this state of affairs, don t. The judges offered a fair reading of the law as it stands and they had the good sense to ignore Verizon s absurd, corporations-are-people argument that net-neutrality regulations stomp on its First Amendment rights. Verizon, in turn, did what most large corporations with many lawyers on retainer do: Try to engineer the loosest regulatory climate possible.

The FCC itself queued up this collapse back in 2002, when it chose to classify cable Internet providers not as telecommunications services but as information services, then repeated the mistake in 2005 when it put phone-based broadband under the same category.

What s the difference? The FCC says a telecommunications service is used to deliver information without change in the form or content of the information, while an information service consists of applications that run over the pipes of a communications network and depend on computers to generate, store, or process information.

If you think the former sounds a whole lot more like how Internet access works yes! I don t pay Verizon to add some kind of value to the information other people post on the Internet; I pay it for a fast FiOS connection with the boring reliability of a good old dial tone, and without any lingering Verizon aftertaste.

But that s not how the FCC acted under the Bush administration, and it declined multiple opportunities to undo that mistake under the Obama administration.

Now what? The FCC could try appealing, as Chairman Tom Wheeler suggested in a statement. But the court s logic is clear and supported by all three judges on the panel. The FCC could undo its mistakes of 2005 and 2002 by saying that Internet access is, in fact, a telecommunications service like you probably thought it was all along. But why would it change course after playing a losing hand so stubbornly?

Congress could pass a law. But who are we kidding? Many Republicans hate the idea of giving the FCC added regulatory authority, and many Democrats don t want to gut it further, so expect nothing to happen there.

We may be stuck with public shaming and scolding maybe followed by a different three-letter agency, the Federal Trade Commission, stepping into particularly egregious cases to use its own authority to punish abuses of market power. All it will take is for some Internet users to have their ISP monkey with their connection and then make enough of a fuss about it. Who will be first?

Yahoo COO de Castro Leaves With Millions

Yahoo Chief Operating Officer Henrique de Castro stepped down from the Internet company on Wednesday after disappointing advertising results.

De Castro is leaving Yahoo, with millions of dollars in severance and other compensation, effective Thursday, the company said in a regulatory filing.

He came under pressure last year as a string of mobile content-focused acquisitions, led by the Tumblr deal, failed to revive Yahoo’s ad revenue growth. That happened in the midst of a booming online ad market, led by rivals such as Google, Facebook and Twitter.

De Castro, 48, was CEO Marissa Mayer’s first major hire. A former Google ad executive, he joined Mayer, also an ex-Googler, in October 2012 and received a lucrative pay package for making the jump.

He will receive severance and other payments and equity awards that were given to him when he joined, Yahoo said in its regulatory filing on Wednesday.

The compensation package included restricted stock units with a target value of $20 million. In the event de Castro was terminated, all the equity would immediately vest, according to the original employment agreement. He also got other equity awards that were worth $36 million but vested over four years.

In total, de Castro may be leaving with about $30 million for less than two years of work. The fact that Yahoo’s Mayer is willing to take such a hit suggests that the advertising side of the company’s business needs a lot of attention.

"This was not a decision they took lightly," said Ron Josey, an analyst at JMP Securities. "He was brought in to help turn around Yahoo’s core ad business, and that didn’t happen."

Despite all Mayer’s investments, in 2013, Yahoo lost its spot as the No. 2 digital ad seller in the U.S. to Facebook for the first time, according to eMarketer.

Yahoo’s share of U.S. digital ad revenue dropped to 5.8% in 2013 from 6.8% in 2012. Facebook’s share grew to 7.4% in 2013 from 5.9% the year before. Google, de Castro’s old employer, remains the dominant player, with a 39.9% share, eMarketer data show.

Hackers Use Refrigerator, Other Devices to Send 750,000 Spam Emails

Hackers have launched what is being called the first attack from the Internet of Things, which included a refrigerator.

According to BBC News, security researchers at Proofpoint discovered that hackers used over 100,000 devices to send spam emails, exposing security flaws in gadgets considered to be part of the Internet of Things.

Before I continue using that term, the Internet of Things is a fairly new tech term that refers to every device in a home having a computer chip. This includes devices like refrigerators, door locks, thermostats, etc.

The hackers broke into gadgets such as home-networking routers, computers, televisions, connected multi-media centers and one refrigerator.

Through the use of these devices, the hackers successfully sent 750,000 spam emails to individuals and companies around the globe. The hack occurred between December 23, 2013 and January 6, 2014.

It was reported that about 75 percent of the emails were sent using traditional computers, while about 25 percent were sent from home appliances.

Proofpoint noted that the job wasn’t too difficult for hackers, as many were easily broken into due to the owners not setting the devices up correctly, or using default passwords that came with the devices.

"Many of these devices are poorly protected at best and consumers have virtually no way to detect or fix infections when they do occur," said David Knight, general manager of Proofpoint’s information security division.

Google Glass Driving Citation Case Dropped

Cecilia Abadie was found not guilty for a driving citation she received after a San Diego police officer ticketed her for wearing her Google Glass device while she was driving.

Back in October, Abadie had been pulled over for speeding, when the police officer noticed she was wearing her Google Glass and issued an additional citation.

Abadie then took to her Google + page where she wrote, "A cop just stopped me and gave me a ticket for wearing Google Glass while driving!" She has claimed that the device was not on while she was driving.

She had received the additional citation due to a California law that stated that drivers are prohibited from using a device where they could watch TV, except if it’s being used for GPS.

Now the case has been tossed because Commissioner John Blair ruled that the police officer had not provided proof she was using Google Glass while driving, reports The Associated Press. He did note that the law that Abadie had originally been cited under could be applied to Glass due to its vague language.

She said after the case, "I believe it’s an initial success but we have a long way to go."

Microsoft Ending Anti-Virus Protection for Windows XP

The end is near for Microsoft s widely used operating system, Windows XP.

April 8 the long-awaited end-of-support date for the 12-year-old OS shouldn t take most users by surprise.

However, another Microsoft decision regarding XP may startle those die-hard XP users who refuse to upgrade. This week, the company announced that on April 8, it will also end support for the Windows XP version of Microsoft Security Essentials, the company s free security and anti-virus application.

Not only will users of Windows XP receive no more security patches after April 8, but their installations of Microsoft Security Essentials will get no more virus updates, leaving their machines doubly unprotected.

Ending support for Microsoft Security Essentials is Microsoft s not-so-subtle way of nudging XP loyalists toward its newest offering, Windows 8.1. With the free security application out of the picture, the millions of users still clinging to XP will have to find another free anti-virus software product, or risk the onslaught of malware attacks that will likely follow XP s demise.

Between 20 and 30 percent of Internet users worldwide still use Windows XP, according to recent data, including more than 50 percent of users in China. Businesses are scrambling to avoid the coming XPocalypse, but millions of individuals will also need to update their systems to avoid unrestricted malware attacks.

If you re still using XP on your PC, Microsoft recommends upgrading to a newer version of Windows before April 8. To upgrade to the newest version of Windows from XP, you ll first need to download and run Microsoft s Window 8 Upgrade Assistant to check if your PC meets the hardware requirements for Windows 8. If your PC doesn t, you should consider buying a new computer preloaded with Windows 8.

Whether or not their PCs can support Windows 8, current XP users should also back up any data they wish to transfer to their new systems, as upgrading from XP (or Windows Vista) means losing all files, settings or programs currently stored on the old OS.

Microsoft Grants XP Anti-Virus Software A Reprieve

Microsoft has backed off the impending XPocalypse at least a little.

The company has reversed last week’s decision to end anti-virus updates for the Windows XP versions of its in-house anti-virus software packages on April 8, when Windows XP is expected to receive its final security patch.

That would have been a serious blow to many Windows XP users, leaving them doubly exposed to malware and attackers. It’s estimated that between 20 and 30 percent of personal computers worldwide run Windows XP today, and tens of millions of users aren’t expected to have upgraded to other operating systems by April 8.

Instead, Microsoft will continue anti-virus definition updates for its Windows XP anti-virus software until July 14, 2015.

"For enterprise customers, this applies to System Center Endpoint

Protection, Forefront Client Security, Forefront Endpoint Protection and Windows Intune running on Windows XP," stated a Microsoft blog posting today (Jan. 15). "For consumers, this applies to Microsoft Security Essentials."

Most third-party anti-virus software makers plan to continue support for Windows XP well beyond April 8. A list compiled by German anti-virus software testing firm AV-TEST finds that of 26 third-party vendors, 22 plan to continue XP support for at least two more years.

However, as the Microsoft blog post notes, "the effectiveness of anti-malware solutions on out-of-support operating systems is limited."

Microsoft Security Essentials is a free anti-virus application for consumer users of Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7, but users must manually download and install it.

In Windows 8, a successor application called Windows Defender is built in, but will go dormant if a third-party anti-virus product is activated.

Microsoft’s blog posting did not specify whether the Windows XP version of Microsoft Security Essentials would still be available for download after April 8.

The Microsoft Malware Protection Center did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

3 Easy Ways to Protect Your Kids Online

There are plenty of options for helping to corral your kids on the Internet. Most do a decent job of keeping your progeny away from the worst of the Web; all of them have flaws. But these three stand out above the others for ease of use and effectiveness, and better yet two of them are free.

Norton Family Online. The free version lets you monitor every site your kids visit, examine a list of everything they search for, and track their activity across social media via any Internet connection. You can tell Norton to always allow (whitelist) or block (blacklist) certain sites, customize the settings for each child, and set time limits so you can boot them offline when it s time for bed. A premier version ($50 annually) lets you monitor their instant messages, video consumption and mobile devices.

The downside? You ll have to download and install a small bit of code on every machine your kids use, as well as your own. And like most software, it can be a bit finicky. I ve had to reinstall it a few times when something wasn t working.

OpenDNS Family Shield. This free service uses a specially configured domain name server (DNS) to secure every device that accesses the Internet via your WiFi router. Think of DNS as a kind of phone book for the Internet. Whenever you type a Web address (like Yahoo.com), your browser uses a domain name server to translate the URL into an Internet Protocol address (like 98.139.183.24) that computers can understand. Using OpenDNS, you can choose which types of websites to block in 59 categories, as well as create whitelists and blacklists.

To use OpenDNS, though, you need to be comfortable futzing with your WiFi settings. (The hardest part? Remembering the damned password for the router.) And everyone who accesses the Net through that router has to play by the same rules. If you ve got little ones in the house, you ll likely find these limitations a bit, well, limiting.

Skydog Smart Router. This is, frankly, the best Web monitoring solution I ve ever encountered. (See my full review of it.) The $149 Skydog combines Norton s customizability with OpenDNS s router-based controls, giving you one simple Web-based dashboard to rule over every Net-connected device in your home. Parent company PowerCloud Systems recently added Common Sense Media s age-based guidelines to its Web monitoring product.

Just about the only thing Skydog can t do is stop your wee ones from accessing the Web via their smartphone s 4G connection. For that you ll need Norton or another mobile security app.

Facebook Snooping On Job Candidates May Backfire For Employers

It s 2014, which means that Facebook will be 10 years old this February. Since the site launched it has become standard procedure for companies to screen job candidates based on their social media profiles. A recent study, however, suggests that the practice may actually drive away qualified applicants who feel that their privacy has been compromised.

Researchers at North Carolina State University have found that when job applicants realize an organization has viewed their social media profile, they are less likely to perceive the hiring process as fair, regardless of whether they are offered the position. The practice may have serious repercussions for the hiring organization s reputation and make applicants more inclined to resort to litigation, says Will Stoughton, a doctoral student in industrial psychology and lead author of the paper. The study was published in the Journal of Business and Psychology.
 There could be all kinds of negative consequences for creating a selection process that is perceived as invasive and unfair, says Lori Thompson, a psychology professor at NC State and one of the paper s co-authors. When you think about the fact that top talent usually has a lot of choices as to where they want to go to work, it begins to really matter.

Although job applicants would not necessarily know if their social media profiles had been screened, they do have several ways of finding out, Thompson says. For instance, an applicant might be tipped off after receiving a suspicious friend request or by talking with current employees and hiring managers who disclose the information either accidentally or on purpose in the course of the interview.

In 2013 almost half of all companies reported using social media profiles to make hiring decisions, according to a survey by the London-based Institute for Employment Studies. Although the practice is pervasive, social media screening is a relatively new phenomenon, and many companies lack clear guidelines about how and when it should be used raising questions about whether the practice violates any anti-discrimination laws. The legal landscape concerning the use of social media for screening is changing quickly, Stoughton says. Organizations that

don t have formal processes regarding the use of social media for selection may put themselves at risk of legal complaints because of inconsistent practices.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act and other anti-discrimination laws prohibit employers from making hiring decisions on the basis of certain protected characteristics, such as an applicant s race, ethnicity, religion, gender or disability status. Those details are often present on an individual s social media profile, however, giving managers access to information that would not necessarily be available to them otherwise. Profile screening could thus potentially color their judgment of the applicant whether they realize it or not. For instance, in a 2009 study conducted for the site CareerBuilder, more than half of employers reported that the biggest factor influencing their decision not to hire an applicant was the presence of provocative photos on the candidate s social media profile, an issue more likely to affect women than men.

In the first of two experiments, 175 college students applied for what they thought was a temporary research assistant position. Two weeks later, the researchers informed some of the students that their social media profiles had been screened for professionalism, whereas others received no information about screening. The students were then asked to give anonymous feedback on the selection process.

Students whose social media profiles had been screened found the selection procedure to be unfair and were less attracted to the organization than students who were not told they had been screened. The result is consistent with previous research, which has indicated that when potential employees feel they have been treated unfairly, they are less likely to accept a job offer and may be more likely to quit if they have already started employment. The screening and selection process is the first interaction between the applicant and the company, Stoughton says. Applicants may interpret poor treatment, such as screening via social media, as an indication of how they would be treated on the job.

 It s a particular concern in terms of thinking about the reputation of the company and what they are communicating to future employees, agrees Kristl Davison, an organizational psychologist at the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration. I think it could certainly lead to higher turnover in the long run.

The second experiment tested if the results generalized beyond college students. Stoughton and his team recruited 208 American adults using an online survey tool and asked them to imagine they were applying for a job. Participants were given a hypothetical description of the hiring practices at a fictional company and were separated into three groups. One group was told that their Facebook profiles were screened and that they had received a job offer; another was told that their profiles were screened and that they had not received a job offer; the a control group did not receive information on the company s social media policy.

As in the original experiment, the participants who were told that their social media profiles had been screened formed negative opinions about the hiring organization regardless of whether they had received a job offer. They also reported that they would be more likely to sue an organization if they found its hiring practices to be unjust.

Davison points out that although screening job applicants social media profiles is now routine, few studies have assessed the practice s

validity as a hiring tool. She thinks that the NC State paper is an important first step but says that more research is needed to make sure the information gleaned from an applicant s social media profile actually tells an organization relevant information about the applicant s fitness for the position, as well as whether the interpretation of that information is standardized across all observers.

It s now accepted wisdom that job applicants should clean up their social media profiles before sending out their resumes, but organizations should also be careful when using sites like Facebook and Twitter in hiring decisions, Davison says. She encourages companies to adopt strict guidelines for social media screening, such as those developed by the Chartered Institute of Professional Development, which include giving job candidates a chance to respond if some aspect of their social media profile has negatively influenced their application, and informing them that their profile may be screened ahead of time.

There s something to be said for doing this in a way that seeks the applicant s permission, paper co-author Thompson says. It s possible that if that is handled well, that could even reflect positively on an organization.

What Windows 9 Must Do To Avoid Flopping Like Windows 8

Windows 8 is a flop. It is a painful thing to say about one of the most ambitious operating systems ever released, but the stats don t lie. It has taken half the OS market share Windows 7 did in its first 12 months (10% vs. 20%) and now the adoption rate is so slow it is barely gaining on its 4 ‰ year old predecessor. Finally Microsoft has had enough.

This week leaks flooded out that Windows 9 will be formally announced at Build, Microsoft s annual developer event in April. If true this is an extraordinarily short gap for the company to jump between Windows versions and it is thought Windows 9 will formally go on sale in early 2015 as part of the Threshold wave of updates it will apply to its Windows, Windows Phone and Xbox OSes.

But if Windows 9 is to avoid the pitfalls of Windows 8 it is going to have to make some major changes. These are my suggestions, and I welcome yours in the comments.

In merging the traditional Windows desktop with a finger-friendly touchscreen interface Windows 8 broke new ground, but the implementation was jarring. Speculation is Microsoft may formally split the platform into formal desktop and Windows RT only versions, but that would be a backwards step.

Instead the two need better integration. Syncing wallpapers between both was a step in the right direction, but the touch UI should have a transparent background to feel more like a flyover to the desktop and therefore never disorientating the user. It also needs to enable apps to operate on the desktop (not in a split window) to encourage greater use and spur on developers.

The advances Windows 8 made in touch usability were negated by the ropey keyboard and mouse integration as Microsoft threw out the baby with the bathwater. Catering for new laptop and tablet form factors is well and

good, but forgetting (or ignoring) 99 per cent of the market using traditional laptops and desktops was foolish. A new, universally accessible control method for Windows 9 is a priority particularly for touchpads where compensatory gestures have become horribly fragmented between PC makers.

Ever since the iPhone Retina Display ultra-high resolutions have been all the rage first in phones, then tablets, now in laptops and desktops. Windows 8 coders failed to address this and the increasingly wide array of high resolution laptops and 4k monitors result in a ludicrous Windows 8 desktop experience. Websites and text have to be blown up around 200% while menus, tabs and other crucial parts of the user interface shrink becoming microscopic.

The flaw is a lack of scaling, something Mac OS X wasn t immune to when Apple launched Retina Display MacBook Pros but it still works better than Windows 8. The trouble is not only does the Windows 9 desktop need to scale, but it needs to introduce upscaling for legacy software to also make these programmes useable. A huge, but essential task.

Hot Corners were introduced in Windows 8 to bring some of the touch navigation gestures to keyboards and mice, but they are horrible. Hot Corners are activated when a mouse pointer ventures near the top left, top right and bottom right corners of the screen or when the pointer gets to the bottom left corner then moves vertically.

Needless to say these areas of the screen are regularly visited by the cursor in normal use when looking to open, close, minimise or maximum windows and programmes. This causes endless frustration as users looking to manipulate windows are dragged off into touch gesture shortcuts and users looking for touch gesture shortcuts end up accidentally manipulating windows (image right cursor over the close window option brings up the Charms Bar). At the very least there needs to be an option to disable HotCorners, if not redesigning them completely.

For Windows users part of the appeal is it is not Mac OS. That is Windows brings greater freedom to pick, choose and customise itself using the software you want in the manner you want. Windows 8 veers dangerously away from this imposing Windows Live accounts on all users, SkyDrive for backups, Bing for search and more. It is time Windows remembered where its appeal comes from in the first place.

Microsoft may have thought it was leaping ahead of the pack with its revolutionary Windows 8 UI but, in truth, both Apple and Google better integrate their distinct mobile and desktop platforms. With Windows Phone 8.1 lifting the lid on hardware restrictions and the Xbox One launching with bags of unfulfilled potential Microsoft needs far better communication between these powerful platforms.

This means synchronised media content, app purchases, remote control and if Sony can make PlayStation 4 content run on the Vita, Microsoft should be able to bring Xbox One gaming to Windows Phones and Windows 9 PCs and tablets. No company has Microsoft s breadth of platforms, it needs to start capitalising on that.

While it has not met commercial expectations, the good news for Microsoft is Windows 8 has already done much of the heavy lifting for Windows 9. It is fast, efficient, stable and has excellent inbuilt security. With this foundation the list above feels far from wishful thinking and Microsoft should be looking to implement them all and much more.

Outgoing Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer famously said Microsoft bet the company on Windows 8. It didn t. With its vast wealth Microsoft took a calculated but affordable gamble. This time things are different. Windows 9 is not coming off the goodwill of a respected predecessor, PC and laptop sales are collapsing against the threat of tablets, Apple is edging ever closer to Mac OS XI and Google is starting to gain momentum in the desktop and laptop space with Chrome OS and Android both of which are expected to unify during Windows 9 s lifetime.

Windows 9 is now where Microsoft bets the company.

Facebook Adds Trending Topics to Its Site

Facebook on Thursday announced Trending, a new section in the top right corner of the News Feed that highlights TV shows, events and articles that are being talked about by its users. Stories that appear inside Trending are picked by algorithms that identify spiking keywords on the social network and then find associated articles to link to. Facebook says that these articles will come from public Facebook Pages and public figures, but also from Pages you follow and from posts by friends. You can t yet buy sponsored trends like you can on Twitter, but Facebook won t deny that they re coming. Trending is rolling out first to the US, UK, India, and Australia.

Facebook has experimented with trending stories and topics time and again and in various places around the site. While Facebook hasn t yet nailed down exactly where it wants to promote breaking news, one thing is clear. In a world where RSS is dying and Twitter hasn t reached critical mass, Facebook intends to be the place you check for news whether it s in the News Feed or inside a dedicated Facebook app just for news.

Teens Flee Facebook, But Baby Boomers Take Their Place

Facebook started as a social network for college kids, and it really took off from there.

But now, it may have reached a saturation point among that group. A new study shows teens are turning away from Facebook. So who is liking the social network these days?

Facebook might be more for grandpa these days, and junior is turning away.

The social network was once a hallmark site for teens and young users, but now, Facebook seems to be falling out of favor with that age group.

A new study from I-Strategy Labs said that over the past 3 years, the number of 13 to 17-year-olds on Facebook plunged 25 percent. Also falling? The second-youngest age group, 18 to 24-year-olds.

And look at who’s logging on...baby boomers.

The growth among the 55-and-older group has exploded up to 80 percent in the past 3 years!

It’s not a huge surprise. Facebook’s CFO said in October that it saw a decrease in teenage daily users during the quarter, and the stock plunged that day.

But not all experts are worried. One analyst said Facebook can recapture those young users.

The company is trying to do just that. It bought Instagram a few years ago, a site that’s growing in popularity among teenagers.

=~=~=~=

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.